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BY CAVIS & TRIMMIE.

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[From the New York Sunday Times.]

WEDDED AND WIDOWED.

One beautiful summer morning, about fifteen years ago, the inhabitants of the little town of New Madrid, on the Mississippi river, beheld a gorgeous pageant moving up that magnificent stream, which in so many respects has the appearance of an immense inland arm of the ocean. The spectacle to which Lullade was a steambot on her first trip—one of those vast floating palaces just then beginning to adorn the western waters, like visions of enchantment—in grace, airy and symmetrical as the gliding moon—in speed, swift as the antelope in its native wilds—in action, obedient to the hand at the helm as anything possessed of life and will. This vessel stopped but a few minutes at the wharf of the town previously mentioned, and two persons went on board, with trunks, handboxes, and other equipments, which plainly indicated that they were starting on a journey of some distance or duration.

One of these was a youth who could scarcely have passed his minority; and yet he might, obviously, and without presumption, lay claim to all the essential elements of developed manhood, in form, in features, in activity and strength, and, more than all, in the cool self-possession and calm bravery of his bearing. All his gestures denoted confidence in himself, and courage in relation to the whole universe besides. As he walked, his feet struck the earth boldly and proudly, seeming to say, "This belongs to me!"—not like those men whose soft, almost shrinking steps appear to be a sort of timid apology for daring to touch the world. Every flashing glance of his bright blue eyes was a revelation of mental and moral power and noble heroism of heart, while his countenance, vinous, at the same time, magnanimity, mercy, and the choicest social virtues. He was dressed in a suit of black—rich, but not gaudy, such as was then, and still is, usually worn by the wealthy class of planters in the southwest.

His companion was a young girl, not more than sixteen years of age, and never did that sweet spring time of life produce a more beautiful flower—if, indeed, she could be called a terrestrial creation, and were not rather a rose dropped down out of heaven by the angels as a sample of the blooms in Paradise. She was, indeed, lovely beyond all description, so that no words can give any idea of her conquering charms. Nor could her likeness be adequately limned on paper or canvass, except in pictures drawn by sunbeams fresh from a cloudless sky. The unity of grace, the magic of wondrous power which she wielded over all hearts that came within the sphere of her influence, did not consist so much in the exquisite finish of any one special part, as in the blended, unspeakable beauty of her whole countenance, irradiated by eyes dark as night, yet luminous as the evening star, and withal inexpressibly sad, as if foreseeing in the dim distance some horrible fate that could not be shunned.

Who were these two young travellers thus commencing their journey, and whither were they bound? As this is a narrative of facts, without the intervention of fictitious incidents, no coloring of mystery is necessary, and the answer may well be given here as in the sequel. The youth was the son of General Thornton, a planter of immense wealth on the banks of the Mississippi, not far from New Madrid; and the girl, who had previously answered to the name of Eva Sims, had been governess of the young mistress in the family, having come from St. Louis for that purpose. She had no other riches save an excellent education, a stainless character, the rarest virtues of the heart, and her marvellous and matchless beauty. Then followed almost as a matter of course the old story. Alfred Thornton, with all the volcanic violence of his nature, and without consulting parental taste or judgment, fell suddenly in love with the charming instructress of his sisters. The general, his father, chided, reasoned, stormed, threatened, and finally turned the innocent object of the son's passion out of doors, but all in vain—for the infatuated youth went forth with her, and the same day they were wedded and sailed for the Upper Mississippi.

At the time the newly-married pair came on board the Reindeer, as the splendid steamer before noticed was called, the vessel had been already crowded to such a degree that they would not have obtained a room, but for the voluntary courtesy of a gentleman who resigned his own for their use. The passengers were of the most heterogeneous, not to say contradictory description, consisting of merchants and mechanics, planters from the burping plains of the south, and peddlers from the frozen snows of Maine and Vermont; rude boatmen, the children of river life, and perfumed beaux, that scorned everything touched with the smell of labor, whether on land or water; but still, above all classes, that of the gamblers predominated, both in numbers and impudence. It is well known that some of these sharper literally live on the western steamboats, changing from one to another as savages shift their hunting grounds, and that they have no other home; but it is very seldom that so many of the same lawless profession meet together in one cabin

as were assembled that day, either by chance or design, on the vessel above mentioned.

It is easy to imagine the effect produced among such a throng by the appearance of young Thornton and his beautiful bride. Countless expressions in whispers, and even audible murmurs, were uttered as they passed, such as, "Who are they?" "Can it be his sister?" "How pretty!" "What an eye!" "Is she his wife?" and a hundred other idle sentences, some of them as idle as they were foolish and unfounded. Among the persons who seemed to take the most delight in such expressions of impertinent curiosity and suggestions of wanton thought, were two gamblers, seated at a card table near the bar, which is always situated at the extreme front of the cabin.

One of these, a small, dark man, with a restless countenance, a squalling, disagreeable voice, and the profile of a hawk, addressed the other: "Well, Captain Turner, what do you think of our new lady passenger? Is she a wife or a sister?"

The other, who was a mighty mass of bone and sinew, with keen gray eyes and enormous whiskers, made answer: "I cannot tell, Doctor French; but I intend to find out."

"I should like to know how you expect to manage so delicate a matter?" said the hawk's profile, with a dubious shake of the head.

"I will ask the gentleman, her companion, if I cannot satisfy myself by any other means," replied Captain Turner.

"You do rather not stand in your boots when you do that," remarked Dr. French, dryly.

"Why not?" inquired Turner, with a sudden look of anger.

"Because, if my judgment is worth anything, I regard the youth as the most dangerous person to meddle with that I recollect ever to have seen before," answered the doctor. "Did you observe what fierce fire shot from his eyes as he challenged, with laughing and fearless looks, the gazing crowd that shrunk before him and opened a wide passage for the two the whole length of the hall?"

"Yes," said Turner, in ferocious tones; "and it is that lofty air of his which I hate—it is that proud, defiant countenance which I intend to humble!"

"You had better not try it," urged French, "for I warn you, it will be no child's play."

"I am not used to child's play," returned Turner, scornfully. "As you well know, I have fought several duels with the most desperate men on the western waters, and, although without a scar myself, I have each time killed my adversary. Why then should I be afraid of this headless boy?"

"Did not I say that you should fear anybody, and I said swear that you do not," responded French; "but really I do not perceive why you desire a quarrel with this stranger, or what injury he can possibly have done you; and it is sheer madness to fight without a cause."

"It is necessary to have a brush now and then, if for no other reason, in order to keep one's hand in practice," said Turner, with a malicious smile; "and, besides, it is now almost a year since I shot anybody; and as there is no chance for a combat where I am known, I must get up one with a stranger, and this youth looks like the right sort of stuff to serve my purpose."

"Captain, I am sure that you must either be the devil or one of hisimps," declared French, with a countenance of the most unlimited admiration.

The red whiskers bowed with royal dignity to the compliment, remarking with infinite self-complacency—"Most persons who are acquainted with me think so, and would rather face a thousand fiends than the muzzle of my single pistol!"

Some readers may find it difficult to believe that the above dialogue contains anything but fanciful exaggeration, or that any human being could be so far brutalized, or, more properly, demonized, as to delight in the shedding of blood for its own sake, and without reference to any ulterior end. And it is indeed true that such characters of alloyed infernal ferocity, such terrible tiger-hearts, are rare, and owe their existence to habits rather than nature. They are the inevitable products of a long and unrestricted indulgence of the vindictive passions. The desperado of this ultra, red-handed type, becomes so by almost imperceptible degrees; and of this the previous history of Captain Turner afforded both illustration and positive proof. His first killed a man in a sudden encounter in the justifiable defence of his own life. Out of that homicide arose a duel, in which he was forced to slay another. These combats happened in the State of Arkansas, where he had before been a youth of the purest character, and the most brilliant promise. Then followed applause and flattery from the multitude, smiles from the ladies, and courteous respect from the gentlemen. Look not grave, O philosopher! Frown not, compassionate fair one!—for it is an eternal instinct in the souls of both male and female, but especially of the female, to detest the coward and admire the brave. We will do homage to the highest courage, to the wondrous daring which scorns and defies death, that arch-enemy and conqueror of us all, in spite of education, in spite of reason, and notwithstanding the bravery which we idolize may be exerted in a wicked cause.

It was thus that young Turner acquired the reputation of a hero. Fatal fame—for then all the candidates for similar honors were his natural rivals, and must pit themselves against him. The elder duellists, who had long maintained undisputed possession of the field, mis-called that of honor, would not admit the pretensions of their competitor until after more than one trial of deadly skill. They would explain his first success as a fortunate accident, or from the defective prowess of all his adversaries, or in any other way that did not concede his equality in the awful game of life-hazard with themselves. The consequence was four successive duels in as many years, and each time with a different kind of

weapon. The first was with pistols, the second with rifles, the third with double-barrelled shot-guns, and the fourth with bowie-knives; and singular as it may seem, every combat resulted in immediate death to his opponent, while he came off without even a mark of lead or steel. Besides, he was compelled to defend himself in as many private encounters from murderous assaults made by the friends and relatives of his victims. In fact, having once declared war, and proclaimed himself a peer among the bravest of the wild frontier, like Napoleon he had no alternative but to fight it out to the end. It is no wonder then, if, at length, he contracted an insatiable passion for blood, and that tempestuous strife and fiery excitement became the only elements in which he could support his bitter burden of existence. With a slight alteration in the circumstances, he realized the terrible story of the emigrant to California, who was imprisoned, during one long winter, by walls of drifted snow within a gorge of the Rocky Mountains, and who was forced for subsistence to prey upon the flesh of his companions, until he formed an appetite for this horrible food, and actually loathed every other article of diet! Thus the desperado becomes a sort of cannibal. All his thoughts and fancies are tinged with crimson, and his very dreams at night are clouded with the smoke of battle and smell of the charnel house! He sleeps with loaded weapons beneath his pillow; he wears them in his bosom and near as possible to his heart; he talks to them as friends in terms of unexpressed fondness; he calls them beloved names, he sometimes kisses them, and often swears by them. Such was the affection of Captain Turner for the duelling pistols which he had used in his earliest combat. He had also practiced with them so effectively that he could bring down the swiftest bird on the wing, snuff out a candle at twenty paces, or split a bullet at twelve upon the blade of a pen-knife; and so fearful was his celebrity, that even men of the most unquestionable courage would turn pale at the least frown which appeared on the uneven surface of his forehead.

This arch-duellist had scarcely uttered the last word recorded in the previous paragraph, when his companion of the hawk's profile said, in a tremulous whisper—"Hush! he is coming this way."

"Let him come," answered Turner, laconically; and his countenance wrinkled again with that strange smile of murderous meaning.

The moment afterwards, young Thornton advanced towards the bar, with his proud, defiant tread, and glancing around upon the throng with a stern look of calm determination—for he had overheard some disconnected, but offensive words, and was conscious that himself and his wife had been the objects of impertinent curiosity, as he conducted her to their state-room, and the purpose of this perambulation was to ascertain if any one felt disposed to iterate the insult when he was not embarrassed by the care of a lady. He had approached very near the upper end of the cabin, and was in the act of passing out on the boiler-deck, when he caught the fierce eyes of the duellist fixed upon him with an expression that, for the instant, caused him to shudder in spite of his reckless bravery. The feeling, however, vanished immediately, without even displaying any token of its existence on his features; and he panned and confronted the desperado with a look of lofty and cool daring, which would have done credit to one of the world's great generals in the crisis of victory or defeat.

It said as plainly as the countenance could speak in the mute language of natural signs: "I defy you, and I defy death also!"—for an unerring instinct, such as belongs to all animals in similar situations, assured him that, although the other was a stranger, he stood in the presence of a mortal enemy.

It was truly a curious sight to watch these two men thus gazing into each other's eyes, and, as it were, silently pledging themselves to the deadliest of all issues—for they had already arranged such a meeting in their minds before either had spoken a word. There was, however, a vast difference in the respective appearances of these tacit antagonists. The face of Thornton was firm, martial, overflowing with magnanimity as well as courage, and altogether unpolished by the dark signs of any base or malevolent passion. The visage of Turner was writhing with its awful smile, his grey eyes were tinged with lurid, greenish rays, such as flash from the glittering orbs of the enraged rattlesnake; and his whole aspect seemed such as a fiend might be supposed to wear when about to seize upon a soul lost to light and life forever more.

Turner was the first to speak, and he inquired in sarcastic tones—"My dear sir, will you be so good as to inform me whether that pretty girl, that you appear inclined to monopolize, is your sister, your wife, or your mistress?"

The answer was not only prompt, but powerful. It consisted of a sudden and terrific kick from the boot-heel of young Thornton in the mouth of the rude questioner, as he sat half reclined in his chair. The unexpected shock loosened several of his front teeth, and sent him sprawling at full length along the floor. Instantly all was confusion and wild uproar. The crowd rushed into a dense circle around the combatants, some favoring one side and some the other, until the affair grew to be a sort of promiscuous free fight, in which all the spectators at last took a part. Cries, curses, and mingled exclamations of rage or fear resounded in every direction, varied occasionally by the sharp rattle of a pistol, or the ringing clash of impinging steel, as the combatants, some favoring one side and some the other, until the affair grew to be a sort of promiscuous free fight, in which all the spectators at last took a part. 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